No. 2. On the Institution of the Sabbath.

On the Institution of the Sabbath.

Ezekiel 20th Ch. & 20th Verse.

Hallow my Sabbaths, and they shall be a sign between me and you, that ye may know that I am the Lord your God.

The Prophet, in this Chapter, is instructed the Almighty, to repeat to the children of Israel the ssings he had conferred on that ungrateful people, toge- r with the conditions required on their part to secure e continuance of them; and after they had violated m, even then, that "his eye had spared them from destroying them." He commanded them to "walk in his statutes—to keep his judgments, and to hallow his Sabbaths," in order that those ordinances "might e a sign between Him & them"—by keeping up in heir minds a reverential awe of his Majesty, "that hey might thereby know that He was the Lord their God." The Sabbath is so notoriously neglected, it is stituted to such unworthy purposes—and is so universally laned, I cannot more usefully engage your attention

than whilst I shew the design of it—and since its insti-
tution comprehends the benefit of men & the glory of God
if men will still persist in the profanation of it, their
blood be on their own heads!

The hallowing the Sabbath, it has been remarked
is the fountain from whence should proceed our careful ob-
servance of all other religious Duties; for as the Law
was among the Jews—so the Gospel amongst us, is "duly
"read and preached to us."—If then we neglect to hear
the Gospel, it is no wonder we are both profligate in prin-
ciple, and degenerate in practice.

We will first consider the Sabbath as a day appro-
priated to God's honor, and then, as it will be a means of
both edification and instruction, why one particular day
in seven rather than any of the other.

The word Sabbath signifies Rest.—And because
God rested the seventh day from his works of the creation
and therefore sanctified it to be a day of rest—the seventh
Day so sanctified, is, by a figure, called a Sabbath. Let
me here just observe that we are not to understand of the
works or rest of God, as we do as of men; as tho' he

d accomplished his work with so much difficulty as to
uire ease and refreshment after his ceasing from working.
e Scriptures teach us a very different lesson.—" Hast
thou not known—hast thou not heard," says Isaiah—
at " the everlasting God, the Lord—the Creator of the
Ends of the earth fainteth not, neither is weary." God
y said, " let there be light, and there was light."—
nd the Psalmist tells us that " by the word of the Lord
he heavens were made, and all the host of them by the
breath of his mouth." So then Sabbath or Rest sig-
ies ease & refreshment after labor and weariness—or
the word may be taken as it signifies a cessation or a
ving off: thus God is said to have rested on the seventh
, because He then left off creating, having, in the six
s before, brought all to perfection that he intended.

That we ought to set apart some portion of our time
e immediately for God's worship & service, the law of
ure will inform us. Otherwise the Heathens who had
but the dictates of nature for their guide, would scarce
had their temples, their priests, their sacrifices, and
appointed solemn days, on which they sacrificed

and performed their religious exercises to their datie
But that such & such a proportion of our time—that o
day in seven should be thus set apart, we know only fro
Revelation.

Now, the seventh day, being called the Sabbath-d
& consecrated, some may be surprized, why we keep the fi
day of the week, and not the seventh, for the Sabba
Our Christian Sabbath indeed is not observed on that d
with the Jewish. But tho' we have changed the day,
consecrate as great a part of our time as the Jews did,
therefore, keep the Command of the Sabbath as duly
they did. The Jews hallowed the seventh day as God
commanded them in memory of his delivering them ou
Egypt, because on that day Pharaoh and all his host w
overthrown in the Red-Sea. But this law was given
obligatory only to them, and it being the type of our
demption from the Power of sin and the Wiles of Sat
it was to give place to that "better thing to come,"
was abolished by Christ. The first day was then co
crated to be the Sabbath in memory of our Savio
rising on that day from the dead. Thus as the Jew

Sabbath "was a sign between God and them," and distinguished the Jews from all other nations by shewing that they worshipped the true God who had created the world, & also miraculously delivered them out of Egypt; so our Sabbath "is a sign between God and us," and distinguishes us Christians from other men, by shewing that we not only worship the true God who created the world, but also that we believe on the Saviour of the world, who "was "raised on the first day of the week for our justifica- "tion." Now this day was not set aside as a day of rest—as if we were to be indulged in idleness, as some enemies of Christianity assert, neither that we should have more leisure for pleasures, & foolish or wicked recreations, as some Christians by their lives interpret it: No—We are to change the object of our care from the concerns of this life to those of the next, from our temporal to our eternal welfare. We are said then to hallow the Sabbath, when we spend it in performing acts of charity, exercises of piety, and offices of devotion.

That we may be the less hindred from, and the less distracted in, the performance of these necessary duties, &,

of consequence, render them more acceptable to Almighty God, we must lay aside all worldly business, otherwise we "shall approach God with our lips while our hearts are "far from Him," and divide the thoughts of our hearts and the devotions of our souls between God and Mammon. The religious duties by which we are to hallow the Sabbath, are, either public and in the congregation, or those that are of a more private nature.

Of the former sort, such as are public, is our constant and devout attendance on the public service and worship of God in the Church. There we are with one accord to put up our petitions to the Almighty, & address him for relief of our manifold wants as a society, as members of Christ's Body the Church. And we are then, likewise, to praise Him with the congregation for the many and great mercies we have received at his hands. We are to bewail our sins, deprecating God's Judgments and interceding for others that God having mercy upon them, would bestow on them his blessings, both temporal and spiritual. To these must be added a due preparation for, and a worthy receiving of, "the Body and Blood

ight of Christ." This is, our Church Catechism teaches us, le n the strengthening and refreshing of our souls," by in- s ar ing into them spiritual life.—This is the highest act of artic igious worship, as it unites us to "Christ our Head," am d constitutes us more particularly Fellow-"members one w th of another." These being matters of the highest concern , o our souls, we ought to bring along with us heavenly houghts, such as are suitable to the sacrafice we offer. con orldly concerns must be left behind, that our minds may wor intent upon the service we are employed in—in order ac render our devotion, our humility, and resignation, dre r gratitude, and charity, acceptable to God—and that , a our profiting may appear" by the exemplariness of our ar ves, "unto all men." This public service has been all fo ong observed in the Church of God, and was called "the nds great Congregation." "My praise shall be of Thee in ents the great congregation."

upo We are not only bound on the Sabbath-day to pre- nora nt ourselves publicly before God, and perform those duties ati the eye of the world, incumbent on us as members of Blo e Church; but there are duties required of us of a more

private nature, either, such as are to be done "
"the closet to our Father which seeth in secret;"
such, tho' not so private as these, yet more private tha
the former. We are to pour out our souls before Go
after a strict examination of ourselves, bewailing in
more particular manner the iniquities of our past li
praying for those graces & blessings we find we more pa
ticularly stand in need of, and giving thanks for th
special mercies God has, in a more peculiar manne
bestowed upon us. And as the word of God is the rule
our faith and the guide of our actions, we ought to
apart some portion of the Lord's-day more especially f
reading and meditating therein—and likewise for readi
such books, and such books only, as may either explain t
Scriptures to us, or may the better enable us to promo
God's glory, and save our own souls, and those that belon
to us. By these means we shall not only render our "con
"versation such as becometh the Gospel of Christ"—but like
wise be enabled to promote the Salvation of our own family
by our praying with them, & by our instructing of them
in the Christian faith, and the fundamental Doctrines

precepts of our most holy Religion, duties, on these days more peculiarly incumbent on all parents and heads of families.

Let me not be understood to exclude cheerful conversation, innocent walks, agreeable society; nor, in a word, whatever may promote the health of our bodies and the improvement of our minds. But every thing we do, even in the way of amusement, on the day dedicated to the Lord, should have a tendency to his glory and our salvation. The Lord's-day should be "so hallowed as to be a sign between God and us, that we may know that He is the Lord our God."

It is a necessary and important question we should all of us ask ourselves, do we hallow the Lord's-day in this manner? The Sabbaths we have spent, have they been dedicated to God? Do we on this day more especially wean our thoughts from the world we must soon leave, & fix them on the place where we are to dwell for ever? If we do not appropriate a part of the Sunday to this purpose, is it likely that we shall any other part of the week?

Again: If the Revelation of the ever-blessed God

pel be worth our perusal and be intended for our benefi
Sunday seems above all other days to be entitled to th
essential Duty. Have we been the means of bringin
Children into the world, and ought we not to acquain
them with their Christian birth-right, how from children
of wrath, they are made heirs of everlasting life? Wha
rational pleasure, what agreeable amusement, what folio
advantages would accrue from it? Would it not be prefer
able to that total insensibility to all Religion which per
vades many families? For, it is notorious, that, in
very many, the Lord's-day is, hardly, to be distinguished
from any other.—Many people indeed contrive that, if
they have any journeys to take, the Sabbath-day, wherein
we are commanded "to do no manner of work, neither
"our man-servant nor maid-servant, nor our ox nor
"ass, that our servants and cattle may rest as well as
"we;" many people, I say, purposely order, that, on
the Lord's-day particularly their journey shall either be
begun, continued, or concluded. Now this conduct is
not only an open affront to God-Almighty, but it is an
act of cruelty to our families, and to every one we employ,

cause it often prevents them from worshipping God, and making that progress in religious improvements which God will assuredly require of them, and which such men so unreasonably and so shamefully deprive them of. Sunday, with other people, is so dull and stupid they scarce know how to get it over, crying with those mentioned by the Prophet, "What a day of weariness is the Sabbath? when will this Sabbath be over?" and therefore, instead of worshipping God, and instructing their families in the duties of Religion, devote the day to impertinent visits, idle conversation, or licentious pleasures. The Sabbath was not instituted for such purposes; and when we apply it to such, in the language of Sacred-writ, we "rob God." How! Shall a man dare to rob God? Yet, says the Almighty, "ye have robbed me". Do you ask in what? "In sacrifices and offerings"—in devoting that time to the amusements of company, and the pursuits of pleasure, which should have been solely appropriated to the Service of your Maker and improvement in your Religion.

Let me perſuade you from this day, my Brethren to hallow the Sabbath, as the Lord God hath commanded you:—attend his worſhip, and let it be to your houſehold not merely a day of reſt, but allow them opportunity, and ſet motives before them—to qualify themſelves for entering into that heavenly Sabbath, that everlaſting Reſt, of which the Lord's-day is an emblem, that "when the Lord "ſhall come, and ſhall enquire, who are his, and who are "they that are godly," we may have ſo paſſed our Sabbath here, as to be admitted to celebrate an eternal Sabbath in the Heavens.

Theophs. J. St. John.

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